VERMONT Workforce Development Council

Executive Committee

Meeting Notes

2/09/09

- 1) Discussion of ideas from panelists and members at the Winter meeting There was discussion about how to define green jobs. There is a green aspect to jobs found in most sectors, however for the purposes of prioritizing public workforce training funds there should be a narrower definition. Examples include adding the skills necessary for the installing and maintaining solar, wind and bio fuel systems to the plumbing and electrical apprenticeship programs, and creating or adopting skill certifications (not licenses) in building efficiency, such as LEED, for construction workers. In many occupations, such as those involved in manufacturing alternative energy products, or the processing of bio fuels, the skills are essentially the same as those required for other manufacturing and processing environments. Jim suggested that we look at ways to use the stimulus infrastructure and workforce investments to build the green workforce for the long term. Pat pointed to the new green skills certification at VTC as one example of this.
- 2) WIA Programs Relating to item1) above, there is discussion of using WIAYouth funds for 18 to 24 year old youth to carry out construction and maintenance projects in the State Parks to which a green construction skill building curriculum could be added. Chip updated the committee on the upcoming Summer Youth Employment Progam. Jerry and Jim agreed to serve on the grant review committee. In terms of resources, the Recovery Act will substantially increase WIA Youth resources. From the pre-existing WIA budget there is about \$300,000 available for summer youth programs. The Recovery Act adds \$2.9m over about two years including both the summer and year-round programs. On the Adult program side, there will be about \$2.4 m over two years, however, like the youth funds these resources can be used only for a strictly limited target group of disadvantaged individuals with multiple barriers to employment. While this will be a significant benefit to the individuals served, it does not allow these funds to be used for incumbent worker training, or even to serve unemployed individuals who may still have household incomes above the poverty level. Nor does it allow these funds to support the States economic

development strategies as is done with the Next Generation training and internship programs. It may be possible to offer group training for eligible individuals in areas of demand like energy efficiency or IT skills. A number of possible providers of this kind of training were mentioned however, the State will be held to traditional employment outcome goals which will be difficult to achieve for groups of individuals. It was suggested that if we pursue a group training approach that DED be included in the grant review process. This leaves the alternative of using the traditional on-on-one counseling approach, which while it may produce higher employment placement rates is also very staff intensive and with limits on State hiring and the specialized counseling skills required, this approach is also challenging.

- 3) Access for women to State and Federal Training Programs Council member Lynn Vera joined the meeting to discuss access to state and federal training programs for women. Although gender specific data is not available on participation in Next Generation programs it appears that except for the healthcare sector, the training programs may be serving more men that women. Recovery Act programs, with their emphasis on transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, and energy efficient buildings retrofits which are essentially construction jobs, will primarily employ men. Lynn asked the Council look into ways to make these training opportunities available to women. Jerry he supports the objective but pointed out that we should be careful about setting quotas as they raise potential legal issues. Possible solutions discussed included making sure that program recruitment materials encourage women, that the RFPs we issue ask applicants to explain how they will ensure access for all populations and that we begin gathering data on this subject. Lynn suggested that promoting these opportunities for women who may not have considered them is also important, and that to be successful, women often need supplemental training on to build their skills and confidence in a male dominated workplace.
- 4) Next Generation strategies for upcoming funding cycle. What does it mean to align these investments with the State Board Strategies? John updated the committee on the meeting with the State Board of Education, and pointed out that they seemed very receptive. There are four areas of possible collaboration; Alternative Tech ed, Secondary Internships, Career Exploration, and WIA youth programs. Doing so will require redesigning the process of selecting and awarding grants. Betsy commented that we should also look to VSAC in the Career Exploration area as a way to support statewide quality delivery. Commissioner Vilaseca will be invited the next Executive Committee meeting to explore these possibilities.